



# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

January 8, 2017

### Discussion Guide

#### LOVE MYSELF?

##### CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

##### GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- WHEN YOU HEAR THE EXHORTATION TO LOVE YOURSELF, WHAT, IF ANYTHING, COMES TO MIND? COULD YOU ELABORATE ON WHY THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE FOR YOU?

##### DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE NATURE OF SHAME AND ITS IMPORTANCE AS A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT.
- READ MATTHEW 22.34-40 ALOUD SEEKING TO PLACE YOURSELF IN THE SCENE. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO BE PRESENT, LISTENING TO JESUS.
- ACCORDING TO JESUS, IN WHAT WAYS DOES LOVE FORM THE BEDROCK OF LIFE AS GOD MEANT IT TO BE LIVED?
- IN THIS BEDROCK OF LOVE IS TUCKED THE PRESUPPOSITION OF SELF-LOVE. READ VERSE 39 ALOUD ONCE MORE. WHAT DO YOU HEAR JESUS SAYING ABOUT SELF-LOVE IN THESE WORDS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE TYPICALLY HEAR JESUS PRESUPPOSING SELF-LOVE? WHAT DO PEOPLE TYPICALLY HEAR WHEN THEY REFLECT ON THESE WORDS? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- WHAT IMPACT, IF ANY, MIGHT AN ABSENCE OF SELF-LOVE HAVE UPON ONE'S CAPACITY TO LOVE OTHERS? WHY MIGHT THIS BE SO?
- DO YOU THINK IT IS EASY OR DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TO LOVE THEMSELVES? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT SHAME, A DEEP SENSE OF NOT BEING ENOUGH, IS WHAT STANDS BETWEEN A LIFE MARKED WITH SELF-COMPASSION AND A LIFE MARKED BY ITS ABSENCE. HOW MIGHT THIS BE TRUE?
- READ ROMANS 5.8 ALOUD SLOWLY. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE LISTENING FOR HOW GOD ADDRESSES OUR SENSE OF SHAME, OUR SENSE OF NOT BEING ENOUGH. SHARE WHAT YOU

KNOW ABOUT HOW GOD FEELS ABOUT OUR SENSE OF SHAME.

- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER SO THAT THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR WORTH MIGHT REPLACE OUR SENSE OF SHAME? HOW WILLING ARE WE TO BEGIN RELATING TO ONE ANOTHER IN THESE WAYS?

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

### SHAME

SHAME IS ONE OF THE LEAST TALKED ABOUT ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF FAITH. IN A RECENT SURVEY OF THE THEOLOGICAL TOMES I HAVE IN MY PERSONAL LIBRARY—I HAVE MORE THAN A FEW!—REVEALED THAT NOT A SINGLE AUTHOR DISCUSSES THE ISSUE OF SHAME BEYOND THE MENTION OF ITS ABSENCE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN (GENESIS 2.25). THIS IS INTRIGUING BECAUSE IT IS PRECISELY THE ENTRANCE OF SHAME INTO THE WORLD WHICH COMBINES WITH SIN TO CREATE THE DEEP SEPARATION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND BETWEEN PEOPLE AND GOD (GENESIS 3.7-10).

WHAT IS SHAME? SHAME IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE BECAUSE IT INVOLVES MORE THAN AN ATTITUDE OR BELIEF. SHAME EXISTS IN FORMS BEYOND WORDS, IN FORMS WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPERIENCED THROUGH EMOTION AND PERCEPTION. SOME HAVE DEFINED SHAME AS A DEEP SENSE OF BEING UNWORTHY OR UNLOVABLE. WHILE THIS IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT SHAME IS, THE WAY IT IS EXPERIENCED MIGHT BETTER BE EXPRESSED IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ONE IS NOT ENOUGH. SOMETIMES SHAME IS EXPRESSED VERBALLY. "I AM NOT ENOUGH." "I DO NOT HAVE WHAT IT TAKES." OR, "I DIDN'T WORK/PLAY/PERFORM WELL ENOUGH." BUT, IT CAN ALSO BE EXPERIENCED EMOTIONALLY AS PEOPLE SENSE THAT SOMETHING IS INHERENTLY WRONG WITH THEM, THAT THEY ARE BAD, OR THAT THEY DO NOT MATTER.

A SENSE OF SHAME OFTEN LEADS TO JUDGMENT WHICH HAS GONE WELL BEYOND ITS PROPER BOUNDARIES OF GENERAL DISCERNMENT TO THE PRACTICE OF SELF-CONDEMNATION. MOST OFTEN THIS SELF-CONDEMNATION APPEARS IN FORMS OF VERBAL VIOLENCE AGAINST ONESELF. "I AM SO STUPID." "HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SUCH A MORON?" "YOU IDIOT!" ALTHOUGH, IT CAN TAKE MORE SERIOUS FORMS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST ONESELF SUCH AS CUTTING AND THE ABSENCE OF SELF-CARE. APART FROM THIS DESTRUCTION OF SELF, SHAME LEADS TO THE DESTRUCTION OF RELATIONSHIPS AS PEOPLE HIDE PARTS OF THEMSELVES FROM ONE ANOTHER OR FROM GOD BECAUSE THESE PARTS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE "AS THEY ARE."

THE ORIGIN OF SHAME AND ITS DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS CAN BE WITNESSED IN GENESIS 2.25-3.13. WHEN GOD CREATED PEOPLE AND GAVE THEM THEIR TASKS WITHIN THE GARDEN, THEY EXISTED IN A WORLD FREE FROM SHAME (GENESIS 2.25). ADAM AND EVE BOTH BELIEVED THEY WERE ENOUGH, JUST AS THEY WERE, A

REALITY SEEN IN THEIR ABILITY TO STAND NAKED BEFORE ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, THE SERPENT TWISTED THE WORDS OF GOD AND EVE, CAUSING EVE TO BELIEVE THAT SHE WAS NOT ENOUGH. WHILE GOD HAD CREATED HER IN HIS IMAGE, SOMEHOW HE HAD DEEMED HER NOT WORTHY TO EXPERIENCE THE FULLNESS OF THIS IMAGE (GENESIS 3.4). IN OTHER WORDS, SHE WAS NOT ENOUGH. BELIEVING THIS LIE, SHE DISOBEYED GOD AND ATE OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL (GENESIS 3.6). IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT IT WAS A SENSE OF SHAME WHICH PRECEDED THE ACT OF SIN. HERE ONE SEES AN INHERENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIN AND SHAME WITH SIN COMING OUT OF PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO SHAME THEREBY MAKING SHAME ONE OF PEOPLE'S ULTIMATE PROBLEMS. FURTHER, IT IS SHAME AND NOT SIN WHICH FIRST LEADS TO THE DEEP SEPARATION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PEOPLE AND GOD. ACTING UPON THEIR SENSE OF SHAME SOLIDIFIED ITS REALITY IN THEIR MINDS. ADAM AND EVE COULD NO LONGER FREELY STAND BEFORE ONE ANOTHER OR GOD BUT THEY HID FROM ONE ANOTHER AND GOD (GENESIS 3.7-8).

THE DEEP SERIOUSNESS OF SHAME AND ITS IMPORT TO THE HUMAN CONDITION IS SEEN IN THE FACT THAT GOD CHOOSES TO DEAL FIRST WITH THE SHAME OF ADAM AND EVE AND NOT THEIR SIN. WHEN GOD APPEARS IN THE GARDEN, HIS FIRST WORDS ARE AN EFFORT TO CALL ADAM OUT OF HIDING; THAT IS, GOD SEEKS TO REVERSE THE EFFECTS OF SHAME (GENESIS 3.9-11). IT IS ONLY WHEN ADAM COMES FORTH TO GOD (WEARING HIS FIG LEAVES THEREBY STILL PARTIALLY HIDING!) THAT GOD DEALS WITH THE ISSUE OF SIN (GENESIS 3.11).

IN OUR MODERN WORLD, EVERY PERSON DEALS WITH THE EFFECTS OF SHAME. THE TRAJECTORY OF OUR LIVES WAS SET WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE FIRST MAN ADAM (ROMANS 5.12-14). WHILE WE TYPICALLY EQUATE THIS TRAJECTORY WITH SIN, SIN IS COUPLED WITH SHAME, THE FORMER ARISING OUT OF THE PRESENCE OF THE LATTER. WHILE THE CROSS IS GOD'S MOVEMENT TO DEAL WITH OUR SIN (ROMANS 5.15-21), IT IS HIS UNMERITED LOVE WHICH DEALS WITH OUR SHAME, FOR GOD'S LOVE DECLARES THAT WE ARE PEOPLE OF INHERENT WORTH (ROMANS 5.8). TO GOD WE ARE ENOUGH, JUST AS WE ARE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT IN ROMANS, THE ISSUES OF SIN AND SHAME ARE BOTH ADDRESSED WITH GOD'S TREATMENT OF SHAME PRECEDING HIS TREATMENT OF SIN (ROMANS 5.8-11), BOTH ISSUES A PART OF THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF GOD IN CHRIST. IN DEALING WITH OUR SIN, WE ARE FREED TO BE THE PEOPLE WE WERE MEANT TO BE, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (ROMANS 8.4). IN DEALING WITH OUR SHAME, OUR SEPARATION FROM GOD IS DEALT WITH, ALLOWING US TO COME OUT OF HIDING AND DRAW NEAR AS CHILDREN OF GOD (ROMANS 8.14-17).

## THE TEXT

### MATTHEW 22.34-40:

#### *PRESUPPOSITION OF SELF-COMPASSION*

IN MATTHEW 22, JESUS IS COMBATting THOSE OF THE RELIGIOUS ELITE WHO WISH TO TRAP HIM IN HIS WORDS (MATTHEW 22.15), AN EFFORT INTENDED TO CAUSE JESUS TO STUMBLE SO THAT HE MIGHT LOSE THE SUPPORT OF THE CROWDS. IN THESE EFFORTS, A CERTAIN RELIGIOUS EXPERT ASKS JESUS TO STATE THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OF THE MOSAIC LAW. THE QUESTION IS REALLY A REQUEST THAT JESUS IDENTIFY WHICH OF THE OVER 600 LAWS SUMMED UP THE REST OF THE LAWS. THE ANSWER WAS ALREADY WELL KNOWN AND HAD A RICH TRADITION WITHIN THE JEWISH FAITH, AN ANSWER BASED UPON MOSES' EXHORTATION TO LOVE GOD (DEUTERONOMY 6.4-9). HOWEVER, JESUS HAD A PENCHANT FOR EMPHASIZING WHAT THE SCRIBES DID NOT. THEREFORE, THE HOPE MAY HAVE BEEN THAT JESUS WOULD PROVIDE A DIFFERENT ANSWER AND BE LABELED AS A RELIGIOUS DEVIANT.

JESUS ANSWERED IN KEEPING WITH JEWISH TRADITION. ONE WAS TO LOVE GOD COMPLETELY (DEUTERONOMY 6.4-9). HOWEVER, JESUS DEVIATED FROM JEWISH TRADITION BY ADDING A SECOND COMMAND WHICH HE STATED WAS OF EQUAL WEIGHT AND SUBSTANCE. PEOPLE WERE TO LOVE THEIR NEIGHBORS AS THEY LOVED THEMSELVES (LEVITICUS 19.18). WITH THIS STATEMENT, JESUS INDICATED THAT LOVE LAY AT THE HEART OF LIFE AS GOD MEANT IT TO BE EXPERIENCED. IT WAS IN LOVING ONE'S NEIGHBOR AND GOD THAT LED ONE TO ACT IN A WAY WHICH WOULD NOT STRAY OUTSIDE THE MOSAIC LAW OR THE TEACHING OF THE PROPHETS.

HOWEVER, WITHIN THIS SECOND COMMAND IS A PRESUPPOSITION WHICH IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED: THE LOVE OF SELF. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE LOVE OF SELF IS NOT COMMANDED BY JESUS. IT IS ASSUMED, PRESUPPOSED TO BE PRESENT IN A LIFE WHICH MATCHES THE INTENTIONS OF GOD. FURTHER, IT IS THIS LOVE OF SELF WHICH FORMS THE BAR FOR ONE'S LOVE OF OTHERS; THAT IS, ONE CAN ONLY LOVE OTHERS INASMUCH AS HE LOVES HIMSELF. THEREFORE, A HEALTHY LOVE OF SELF IS PART OF LIFE AS GOD INTENDED IT TO BE LIVED. HOWEVER, THE REALITY IS THAT IN MANY PEOPLE, THIS HEALTHY LOVE OF SELF IS ABSENT AND IN ITS PLACE IS SHAME, THE SENSE THAT ONE IS UNLOVABLE. THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH.

### **Genesis 2.25-3.11: *Sin and Shame***

LIFE AS GOD MEANT IT TO BE EXPERIENCED DID EXIST IN A GARDEN CALLED EDEN. THE NARRATIVE OF THIS LIFE BEGINS IN GENESIS 2.25. GOD HAS CREATED EVERYTHING, MAKING PEOPLE IN HIS IMAGE (IDOL IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT), HIS REPRESENTATIVES ON EARTH TO GUIDE HIS CREATION AS HE GUIDED AND TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS HE EXPERIENCED IT. THIS LIFE WAS

MARKED WITH A COMMUNITY IN WHICH SHAME WAS NOT PRESENT. ADAM AND EVE HAD THE SENSE THAT THEY WERE LOVEABLE AS THEY WERE. THEY WERE ENOUGH FOR THEMSELVES AND ONE ANOTHER, SO MUCH SO THAT THEY COULD STAND NAKED BEFORE ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, THIS BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY WAS SHORT LIVED.

THE SERPENT, THE CRAFTIEST OF GOD'S CREATURES, CAME TO EVE AND QUESTIONED THE ACTIONS OF GOD. HIS WORDS TWIST THE COMMAND OF GOD TO ADAM AND EVE (GENESIS 2.16) IN SUCH A WAY THAT EVE IS INVITED TO ENTER INTO A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD. IS HE INHERENTLY EVIL? EVE ENTERS INTO THE CONVERSATION, SEEKING TO DEFEND GOD AND HIS ACTIONS. HOWEVER, IN HER EFFORT, SHE OVERSTATES GOD'S COMMAND THEREBY CREATING AN OPENING FOR THE SERPENT TO INSERT DOUBT INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVE AND GOD. SEIZING UPON EVE'S WORDS, THE SERPENT ARGUES THAT GOD HAS WITHHELD AN ASPECT OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE. HE HAS LIMITED ADAM AND EVE'S ABILITY TO BE LIKE HIM. THIS ACCUSATION STRIKES AT THE HEART OF GOD'S CREATIVE ACTIONS, SPECIFICALLY HIS ACTION OF MAKING PEOPLE TO BE LIKE HIMSELF (GENESIS 1.26). WHILE THE SERPENT'S CHARGE IS SERIOUS ENOUGH, IT IS WHAT UNDERLIES THE CHARGE THAT IS THE MOST DANGEROUS. WHY DID GOD WITHHOLD AN ASPECT OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE FROM ADAM AND EVE? THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE ANSWER. HE DID NOT DEEM THEM TO BE WORTHY OF THE EXPERIENCE. IN SOME WAY, GOD DEEMED ADAM AND EVE TO COME UP SHORT, SO HE WITHHELD AN ASPECT OF LIFE IN HIS IMAGE FROM THEM. AT ITS ROOT, THIS IDEA IS THE SEED OF SHAME, THE SENSE THAT ONE IS NOT ENOUGH.

EVE LOOKS UPON THE TREE AND THE SEED OF SHAME WHICH THE SERPENT PLANTED BLOOMED. SHE DESIRED TO BE FULLY LIKE GOD, TO SEIZE WHAT SHE BELIEVED HAD BEEN WITHHELD. IN THIS WE SEE THAT SHE BELIEVED THAT SHE WAS NOT ENOUGH TO GOD. SHE FELT HER SHAME AND SHE ACTED UPON IT, HER SHAME GIVING RISE TO DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S EXPLICIT COMMAND WITH THE SAME SERIES OF EVENTS BEING REPLICATED WITH ADAM. WHEN BOTH ADAM AND EVE EXPERIENCED SHAME AND ACTED UPON IT, THIS SENSE BECAME A PART OF WHO THEY WERE AND ITS EFFECTS WERE IMMEDIATE. IMMEDIATELY, ADAM AND EVE FOUND THEY WERE NOT ENOUGH FOR ONE ANOTHER. THEY BOTH HAD PARTS WHICH THEY DARED NOT EXPOSE TO THE OTHER. THEREFORE, THEY FOUND FIG LEAVES TO COVER THESE PARTS WHICH WERE "NOT ENOUGH" TO BE SEEN.

SOMETIME LATER, GOD ARRIVED AND ADAM AND EVE HEARD HIM WALKING IN THE GARDEN. SHAME ONCE AGAIN RAISES ITS HEAD WITH ADAM AND EVE RUNNING TO HIDE FROM GOD. THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH TO STAND BEFORE GOD. ALL OF THEM MUST BE HIDDEN. INTERESTINGLY, IT IS THIS SENSE OF SHAME WHICH GOD FIRST ADDRESSES AS HE SEEKS TO COAX ADAM OUT OF HIDING. EVENTUALLY, ADAM COMES FORTH, STILL WEARING HIS FIG LEAVES. HIS SHAME IS STILL PRESENT. ONLY

AFTER ADAM'S SHAME IS HIGHLIGHTED DOES GOD THEN TURN TO ADDRESS HIS DISOBEDIENCE.

IN THIS TEXT, A DEEP TIE IS SEEN BETWEEN SIN AND SHAME, THE LATTER GIVING RISE TO THE FORMER. FURTHER, IT IS SHAME WHICH FORMS THE BEDROCK OF OUR SEPARATION FROM GOD AND ONE ANOTHER, AN ISSUE WHICH GOD DEEMS WORTHY OF ATTENTION. IN FACT, SHOULD CREATION BE RETURNED TO ITS INTENDED STATE, BOTH SIN AND SHAME MUST BE ADDRESSED, SOMETHING WHICH THE FOLLOWING WORDS INDICATE AND THE DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE UNFOLDS.

## REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

SHAME. WE RARELY TALK ABOUT IT, BUT WE ALL EXPERIENCE IT, THOUGH SOMETIMES WE DON'T HAVE WORDS FOR IT. SOMETIMES WE REFER TO IT AS OUR PERFECTIONIST NATURE. OTHER TIMES WE TALK AND LAUGH ABOUT IT IN TERMS OF COMPULSION. AT ITS ROOT, IT IS ALL THE SAME. IN THE DEEPEST PARTS OF US WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE NOT ENOUGH. WE ARE FULL OF SHAME. IT IS OUR SHAME WHICH GIVES RISE TO OUR DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD AS WE ATTEMPT THROUGH OUR OWN MEANS TO FREE OURSELVES FROM ITS GRIP. THE OPPOSITE OF SHAME IS THE BELIEF THAT WE ARE ENOUGH. WE MIGHT REFER TO THIS AS A SENSE OF SELF-COMPASSION, A GRACE AND ACCEPTANCE FOR ONESELF AS THEY ARE, NOT AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE. IT IS THIS SENSE OF SELF-COMPASSION TO WHICH WE TURN IN THIS SERIES.

THE IDEA OF LOVING OURSELVES FEELS WRONG, AT LEAST TO ME. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT THAT I WAS TO LOVE OTHERS, BUT SOMEWHERE I PICKED UP THE IDEA THAT THIS LOVE WAS FOR EVERYONE EXCEPT ME. I WAS TO LOVE EVERYONE, BUT NOT MYSELF. I HAVE TAKEN THIS MESSAGE TO HEART AND LIVE OUT A LIFE FREE FROM SELF-COMPASSION. I MAKE SURE IT STAYS FAR AWAY. I KEEP IT AWAY BY REGULARLY TALKING DOWN ABOUT MYSELF. I AM STUPID, AN IDIOT, A PERSON WHO PRETTY MUCH FLUBS THINGS UP. I ABUSE MY BODY BY NOT GETTING ENOUGH REST OR ADEQUATE NUTRITION. WHY CARE FOR MY BODY? I DON'T DESERVE IT. I LOOK TERRIBLE ANYWAY, ESPECIALLY THAT PART RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE. AND I HATE MY BUTT! THERE. I SAID IT. I NEVER FEEL I WORK HARD ENOUGH AND WHATEVER I DO COULD BE BETTER. THESE AND SO MANY OTHER THOUGHTS FILL MY DAY, ALL EXAMPLES OF A LACK OF SELF-LOVE. HOWEVER, WHAT I AM BEGINNING TO REALIZE IS THAT MY LACK OF SELF-LOVE IS HAVING A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON MY ABILITY TO LOVE OTHERS.

YOU SEE, I CAN ONLY LOVE OTHERS TO THE LEVEL THAT I AM WILLING TO EXPRESS LOVE TO MYSELF; THAT IS, MY SELF-COMPASSION CREATES MY CAPACITY TO HAVE COMPASSION ON OTHERS. IF I DO NOT LOVE MYSELF, I CANNOT LOVE OTHERS. ONE PRESUMES THE OTHER. I CATCH GLIMPSSES OF THIS WHEN MY LOVE FOR OTHERS WEARS THIN, AND IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG. PERHAPS THIS IS BECAUSE MY CAPACITY IS LOW. BUT, HOW DO I INCREASE MY CAPACITY TO LOVE MYSELF? IT BEGINS WITH

ALLOWING GOD TO DEAL WITH MY SHAME. IT IS MY SHAME WHICH SAYS I AM UNLOVABLE. HOWEVER, GOD SAYS OTHERWISE. IN MY SHAME, I BELIEVE THE OLDEST OF LIES, A LIE BIRTHED IN A GARDEN. IN CHRIST, I SEE THIS LIE EXPOSED, FOR I AM LOVED, AS I AM, NOT AS I SHOULD BE. I AM ENOUGH. AS I ALLOW GOD'S LOVE IN CHRIST TO SATURATE MY LIFE AND REPLACE THE LIE, I AM MORE ABLE TO LOVE MYSELF. I AM A PERSON OF WORTH AND VALUE. HOWEVER, I AM FINDING THAT I DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVING MYSELF LOOKS LIKE. IT IS THIS JOURNEY WHICH WE WILL TAKE NEXT.

## REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

LOVE OTHERS BUT NOT YOURSELF! SOUND FAMILIAR? PERHAPS YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD THOSE WORDS SPOKEN DIRECTLY, BUT THEIR WEIGHT IS HARD TO MISS, PARTICULARLY IF YOU HANG OUT WITH JESUS-FOLLOWERS FOR VERY LONG. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY WE GOT HOLD OF THE IDEA THAT WE WERE NOT WORTHY OF LOVE, AND THIS IS A PROBLEM BECAUSE OUR LOVE OF SELF CREATES OUR CAPACITY TO LOVE OTHERS. SO WHY DON'T WE LOVE OURSELVES? THE PROBLEM IS ALMOST AS OLD AS TIME ITSELF. THE PROPER NAME FOR IT IS SHAME, BUT REALLY SHAME IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE FIRST LIE WHISPERED INTO OUR EAR BY SATAN, A LIE WHICH SAID "YOU ARE NOT ENOUGH." WE BELIEVED IT AND HAVE BELIEVED IT EVER SINCE, THAT SINGLE LIE GIVING BIRTH TO A WORLD PLAGUED BY SIN. IF WE ARE TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE EXPERIENCED, WE MUST ALLOW GOD TO DEAL WITH BOTH OUR SIN AND OUR SHAME. THE FIRST IS DEALT WITH THROUGH THE CROSS. THE SECOND IS DEALT WITH THROUGH THE INCARNATION, GOD DRAWING NEAR IN LOVE, TAKING US AS WE ARE, NOT AS WE SHOULD BE. IN THE INCARNATION, GOD SHOUTS, "YOU ARE ENOUGH FOR ME!" WHEN WE ALLOW THIS TRUTH TO REPLACE THE LIE WE ARE ONCE AGAIN FREE TO LOVE OURSELVES, BUT WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE? WE WILL TURN TO THIS QUESTION IN THE COMING WEEKS. IN THE MEANTIME, TAKE SOME TIME THIS WEEK TO PONDER WHAT IS TRUE. YOU ARE ENOUGH, A PERSON OF INHERENT WORTH, WORTHY OF LOVE. TRUTH DOES NOT REPLACE A LIE IN AN INSTANT. WE HAVE REPEATED THE LIE OF OUR LACK OF WORTH SO OFTEN THAT IT IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN OUR HEARTS. TO ROOT IT OUT, WE MUST REPEAT WHAT IS TRUE. THIS WEEK, CONSIDER MEMORIZING AND PONDERING ROMANS 5.8 WHICH SPEAKS OF GOD'S DEALING WITH OUR SHAME. SAY THIS VERSE OVER AND OVER TO YOURSELF ALLOWING IT ROOM AND SPACE TO SLOWLY REPLACE THE LIE WHICH SAYS YOU ARE UNWORTHY, YOU ARE NOT LOVED, YOU ARE NOT ENOUGH.



SENIOR  
PASTOR  
**BLAKE**  
SHIPP